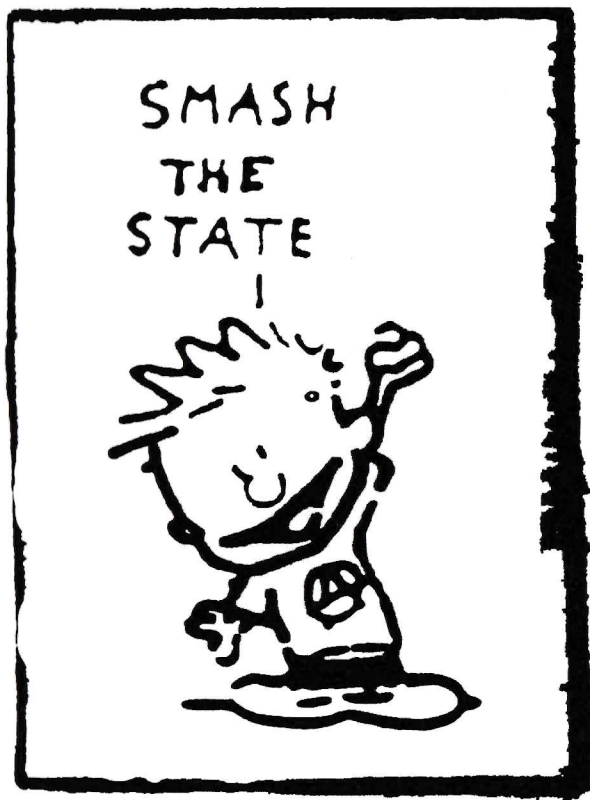


ANARCHY!

a short primer



Rowan Walking Wolf, PhD.

Dearest Reader,

A few years back, I sat with a friend distributing literature at the Portland Zine Symposium. A woman approached us and perused the free zines. She had two children with her, and asked us if we had a zine her kids could read that would explain the basic concepts of anarchy to them. We didn't, and instead gave her the best substitutes we could muster.

After the woman and her kids walked away, it struck me that in all my years of reading radical literature (including DIY zines), I've never really seen a short primer on anarchy. Sure, there are a lot of quality free publications that act as segues into anarchism for folks who have been involved in other political struggles (e.g.- CrimethInc). And there are fantastic historical texts, like ABC of Anarchism by Alexander Berkman, that clearly lay out the ideas driving anarchy. However, there's not really anything that covers the basics of anarchism for folks who have no idea what the hell anarchy means and who don't have the time or interest to read full-length books on the subject.

Two years after speaking with the woman and her children, I've finally gotten around to working on a solution to that problem. The pamphlet you hold in your hands is a brief introduction to the politics and ethics of anarchism, and a cursory exploration into the various schools of anarchist thought. It is by no means a complete look into the world of anarchy. For those interested in learning more, there is a suggested resources section toward the end of this zine.

For healthy landbases, communities, and social relations!
RowanWalkingWolf

DEFINING ANARCHY, DICTIONARY STYLE

A definition seems a good place to start. As a word, anarchism- along with the related word anarchy- comes from the Greek *anarchos*. Broken down, *an-* means without, and *archos*, or Archon, is a term that describes ancient Greek rulers.

To put it simply, the etymology of anarchy means "without rulers." Most commonly accepted dictionaries expand on the etymology with elaborate definitions, some honest, others obvious pro-authoritarian propaganda.

Anarchy is a word we hear quite often. With such a simple definition- *without rulers*- it seems odd that the word is so often misused, abused, and slandered. The purpose of the remainder of this pamphlet is to describe anarchism as a political philosophy, and to defend anarchy from harmful popular misconceptions of what it is and what it is not.

ANARCHY DESCRIBED BY AN ANARCHIST

Although the dictionary definition of anarchy is correct, the idea that the entire philosophy of anarchism amounts to "no more rulers" is insufficient. Anarchism, both historical and contemporary, is concerned with much more than simply abolishing leaders.

I intend to elaborate on the definition of anarchy, but before doing so, I have to point out that I, like all writers, am a propagandist, and I'm also biased toward my own opinions. This seems obvious, but so many authors attempt to swindle and trick readers into believing what they write by leaving their assumptions and biases unstated. I have no intention of doing so, and will attempt, when necessary, to show my own political leanings and to contrast them with what other anarchists think.

As I was saying, anarchy is not only concerned with eradicating leaders. Taken to its logical extreme, the idea of abolishing leaders

really means the abolition of all compulsory and coercive government. Yes, anarchy seeks to destroy mandatory governments that govern by the use and abuse of power. That doesn't mean anarchy advocates for the abolition of all government. Rather, anarchism seeks to establish a society (or series of local communities) in which individuals govern themselves and in which communities are governed by the consent and consensus of all individuals involved. We'll discuss this more in a few pages.

Another primary concern in anarchist thought is the abolition of hierarchy in social/political organizing and in interpersonal relationships. Hierarchy is everywhere in the modern world, and can easily be observed and defined. Hierarchy, simply put, is the stratification of power, that is, some people higher up than others, and some below. This is true in the modern civilized world (< this is propaganda because I hate civilization) in the work world, family structures, marriage, religion, political organization, obligatory government schooling and the relationship between teacher and student, coercive government itself, general hatred toward queer folks, general hatred toward the environment and non-human animals and indigenous peoples, and the perpetually fucked up relationships between patriarchal men and subjugated women (more on this later, too).

Hierarchy is also found in the interpersonal bigotry found in hierarchical societies. For example, hatred on the basis of race, sex or chosen gender, sexual preference, age, nationality, income or profession, social "class" (i.e.- rich and powerful or poor and meaningless), and so on. When a person verbally insults a child or an elder simply because the target is young or old, that person is insinuating "I'm better than you". Or, when a good ol' boy tosses out demeaning slurs toward racial or cultural minorities, they're suggesting the same thing.

These attitudes- racism, sexism, homophobia, ageism, classism, and

the like- are all reflections and continuations of hierarchy, and so anarchism is focused on destroying them.

What we have so far is the abolition of leaders, the utter annihilation of all forms of obligatory and hierarchic governments, and the elimination of harmful hierarchical socio-political relationships. These concepts make up the foundation of all anarchist thought, and are found in every meaningful school of anarchism (< obvious propaganda).

The idea of mutual aid- or the very simple concept that we should all work together, share, and help one another, rather than compete and struggle against each other- is also generally accepted by modern anarchists. It's a very basic idea, one that most children are taught at a very young age. In striving for a better present and future society, most anarchists recognize that mutual aid is absolutely essential if we are ever to build non-hierarchical communities.

Modern and historical anarchists generally support organized labor as well, and there are definite links between radical unions and anarchy. Anarcho-syndicalism and other workers' struggles have been essential to the advancement of anarchism. Many anarchists, myself included, criticize modern industrial society and the existence of factories as means of production. However, whether or not they support factories and industry, all wise anarchists should support workers in their struggles against bosses, scabs, and the government. I'm one of the greenest anarchists I know (see below), but I sure as hell support my worker comrades.

The striking critiques offered by feminism have also generally been incorporated into anarchist thought. That is, we modern anarchists find it crucial to recognize and fight against the dynamics of power and privilege inherent in the patriarchy (or male domination and sexism) of past, present, and future societies. It's impossible to build non-hierarchical communities if more than half of their members are

constantly oppressed, looked down upon, raped (physically, psychically, emotionally, spiritually, etc.), spoken over, disrespected, and disregarded. It's also impossible to build such communities if the other half of us (that is, male-bodied people) feel entitled, superior, dominant, "masculine," and in charge. There may be anarchists out there who don't accept the critique of patriarchy and sexism given by feminism to anarchy, but they're idiots.

Also added to the arsenal of anarchic ideas are the critiques presented by anarcho-primitivists, deep-ecology anarchists, and other green anarchists. Green anarchism, as a broad category, is any anarchist thought that is focused on the environment and ecology. This is a relatively new addition to radical thought, but it is a valuable one. Green anarchism recognizes that the destruction of the bio-regional landbases upon which all life- including human life- depends is necessarily hierarchical, and is a direct result of the destructiveness of the civilized nation-states currently dominating the globe. Green anarchy and eco-feminism share a great deal of ground, drawing parallels between the rape and pillage of the planet itself and the rape and pillage of women. Any way of living and governing that destroys wild nature, and thus the land we all depend on, is antithetical to life itself. And anything that's killing all life is obviously in opposition to the building and perpetuating of socially and politically egalitarian societies. Thus, we anarchists must oppose it.

There is also a huge amount of territory that this zine will not explore that details the relationship between civilized societies (that is, those focused in cities with a rural base of agricultural slave-labor) and the nature of domination, subjugation, and ecological destruction, the oppression of indigenous peoples and non-human animal and plant life, and the formation of hierarchical social institutions. This is all too much for a small primer on anarchy to cover, but these concepts have been and continue to be pivotal in the development of modern anarchist thought.

With all of these ideas, and others not presented here, anarchists aim for a better society. The communities that we are building and that we seek to build in the future are not set in stone. Certainly, all the ideas presented above are influential in the establishment of these communities, but there is very little about the future that we anarchists hold to be absolute.

We definitely want to create a society in which there is no coercive government. We want to govern ourselves, and generally accept that we should do so in small groups and by consensus. We also want to destroy mandatory and otherwise oppressive social institutions, ideas, and behaviors that our ethics oppose. Many of us wish to see the complete annihilation of industrial civilization, with a return to simpler, wilder, more primitive communities. Others seek a fictitious technotopia in which all societal problems will be solved with post-industrial technology. Whatever the future vision, we all fight for a better world right now.

DISPELLING POPULAR MISCONCEPTIONS: WHAT ANARCHY IS AND WHAT ANARCHY IS NOT

Before concluding this zine, it seems wise to address some popular misconceptions about anarchy. There are many of these, and surely even the most apolitical person has encountered some of these.

1. Anarchy Promotes Chaos, or Anarchy *Is* Chaos

In a sense, this is true, but not in the way that most people mean when they say that anarchy promotes chaos. The response I usually give people when they say something like this is that anarchy is a political philosophy that recognizes that the universe, our planet, human behavior, and everything that happens in our daily lives is a constant state of chaos. Anarchy recognizes the chaos, does not fear it, and seeks to bend and adapt to it. Anarchy does not promote chaos, anarchy flows with the chaos that is omnipresent.

In a less metaphysical sense, anarchy necessarily encourages chaos at specific times. By challenging coercive society, statist governments, the grunt forces of control (a la cops and the military), and the bourgeois norms that drive society, anarchy by definition must cause chaos. If it is chaotic to rebel, then anarchy definitely encourages chaos. But this isn't intrinsically bad or undesirable. Chaos can be a mighty weapon against the dual forces of mental control and physical repression.

2. Anarchy promotes violence; anarchy is about murder

It is true that at times anarchists have resorted to violence as a tactic. There is a huge division between anarchists currently as to the ethical nature of violence in radical struggle. There are very few anarchists, however, who are opposed to violent self-defense when actively attacked by the forces of control and oppression. Those who oppose self-defense are usually liberal yuppies in disguise.

I, for one, wholeheartedly support the use of violence in anti-authoritarian movements. For far too long, the masters have convinced us that violence is exclusively their domain, and we have cowered and accepted this as truth. It's about fuckin' time we fight back, and I'll sing the praises of anyone who kills a cop or a military jarhead. Those who end the lives of oppressors should be held in the highest regard as liberators.

Dogma aside, for an excellent analysis of violence in radical movements, arguments in favor of violence as an anarchist tactic, and arguments against violence in radical movements and why these arguments are crap, please read Derrick Jensen's excellent book *Endgame*, or download and read a copy of my free zine *Derrick Jensen on Pacifism and Violence, Excerpts from Endgame, Volume II: Resistance*, available for free at yggdrasildistro.wordpress.com.

The idea that anarchy is all about killing people is pure pro-authoritarian brainwashing. Anarchism as a movement uses a huge

variety of tactics, some violent, many others non-violent. Anarchists debate with others, have peaceful discussions in relaxed settings, hold rallies and marches, lock down to targets, sit in trees, hold strikes and defend picket lines, write and publish zines, create other forms of free media, distribute flyers, wheatpaste posters, feed the poor and hungry, hold Really Really Free Markets, smash windows, throw bombs, and occasionally shoot some deserving asshat right between the eyes. Each tactic has its merit, each has its time and place. Besides, those who argue against violence as a liberatory tactic are usually tools of the dominant culture and government anyway.

3. Anarchy promotes illegal activity; anarchy has no respect for the law

This is true on both accounts. Anarchy doesn't recognize the legitimacy of "the law" for a number of reasons. It is created by and for the powerful and rich, to protect present and assure future power and wealth for the powerful and wealthy. Most laws are entirely arbitrary, having no conceivable reason to exist. Laws also have absolutely nothing to do with ethics. That is to say, that which is illegal is not necessarily morally wrong, as that which is legal is not necessarily morally right.

With all this in mind, why the hell would we anarchists respect the law? With no respect for the law, of course anarchy promotes illegal activity. Anarchy *is* illegal activity. Conspiring against nation-states and their governments, fomenting rebellion, teaching ourselves and others how to sustain ourselves and our communities, learning how to make everything we need, and rejecting the false authority of the tools of power are all illegal in some sense or another. We're damn proud to be doing these things. And we're damn proud to do what we feel is right, and to avoid doing what we define as wrong, regardless of what the laws of the dominant culture tell us to think and do.

4. Anarchy is punk rock; anarchy is about clothes and music
This isn't so much a common misconception in popular culture as it is a common misconception in the radical scene itself. The Greek anarchists- superstars of the modern anarchy movement- have worked for years to overcome the idea that anarchists are defined by how they dress, the music they listen to, their dietary choices, and so on. Punk can be seen as an outlet for anarchist expression, but punk and anarchy are not the same thing. Neither are metal and anarchy, nor industrial music and anarchy. Wearing black crusty clothes (as much as I love them) doesn't make me an anarchist, and wearing blue jeans and a polo shirt doesn't mean that you're not an anarchist. We North American anarchists must work hard to transcend these silly ideas.

5. Anarchy is for college students and young people
Anarchism has nothing to do with age. Although the exuberance and will toward freedom common in youth may compel many young folks to become anarchists, there are many middle-aged and elderly anarchists in all walks of life. Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman, two famous anarchists of the early 1900s, remained true to their anarchist ethics through their lives. Goldman lived to 71, Berkman to 65. I know too many anarchists over 40 who are still alive and organizing that I can't name them all. Anyone discouraged by the abundance of young anarchists has probably interacted with too many of the kids mentioned in #4 above. Modern anarchism is not about age, and anyone who says otherwise is an ageist jerkface.

RESOURCES

wikipedia.org

The Anarchism Portal on wikipedia rocks. There's so much good information on this site, especially for those who don't know much about anarchy.

crimethinc.com

The CrimethInc. crew get a lot of shit from non-radicals and anarchists alike, which I find especially ridiculous. These kids are doing so much, who cares about their cute-as-hell demeanor? Visit this website for a host of articles, free literature, posters and such, and blog entries about radical current events. Also check out their selection of books at your local infoshop.

indymedia.org

An independent media outlet for radical and semi-radical (i.e.- liberal wingnut) news. Excellent source for keeping up on current events without all the corporate media bias and bullshit.

infoshop.org

More information and news without corporate bias.

Anarchy Archives

http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/anarchist_archives/

This website has a tremendous number of historical anarchist texts. Includes all your old favorites! If you want to get in touch with your ancient anarchist history, this is the place to visit.

Yggdrasil Distro

yggdrasildistro.wordpress.com

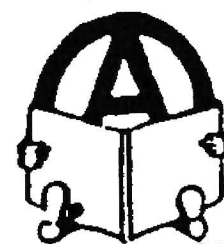
This is the website for my distro, including all my free publications.

zinelibrary.info

A *huge* collection of free (mostly) anarchist literature covering just about every subject imaginable. This is a superb resource for nascent anarchists.

Authors & publications you ought to read:

Derrick Jensen, John Zerzan, Lierre Kieth, bell hooks, *Green Anarchy*, *Rolling Thunder*, *Super Happy Anarcho Fun Pages* (free at tangledwilderness.org)



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